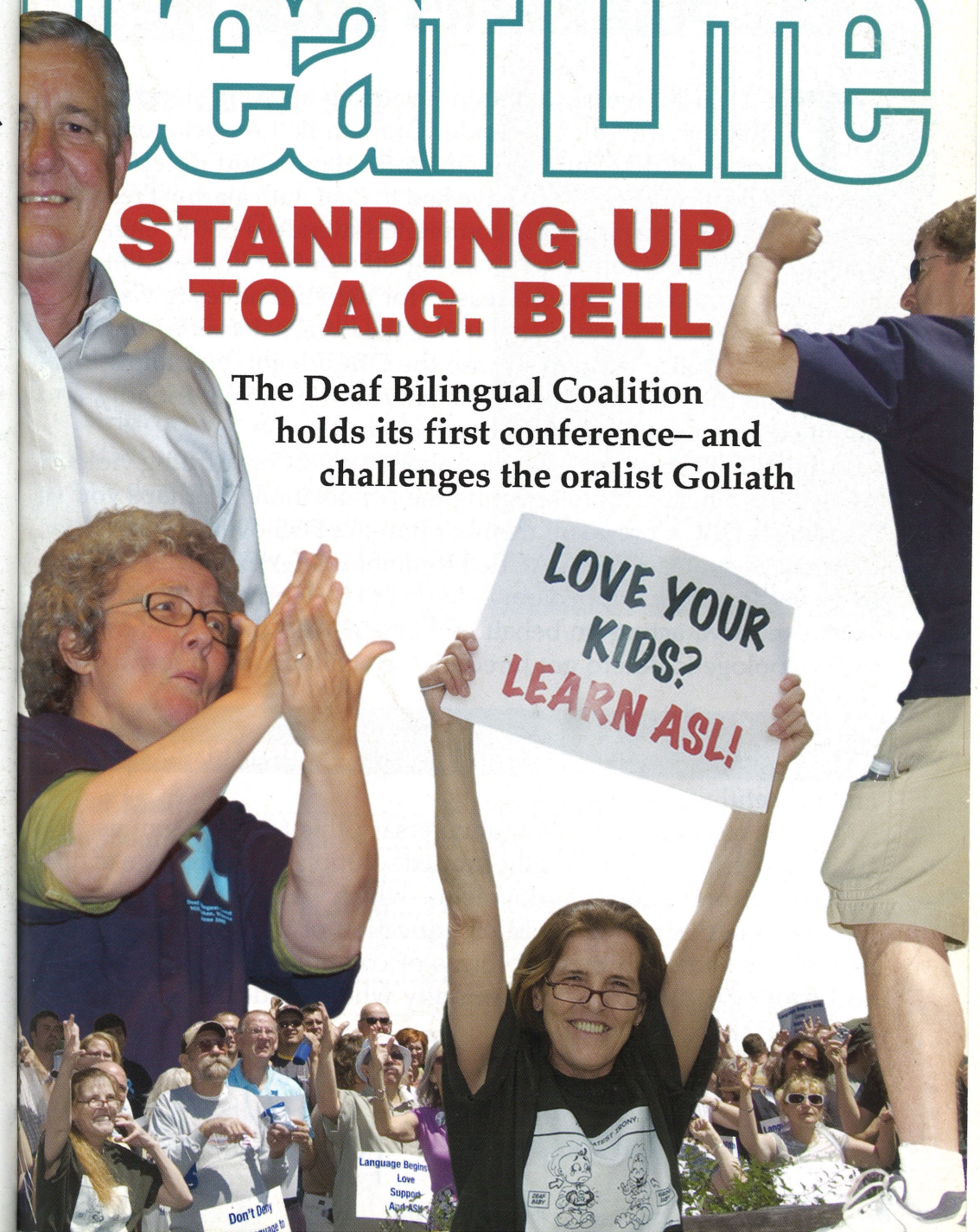
August 2008

DeafLife

$5.00

STANDING UP TO A.G. BELL

The Deaf Bilingual Coalition holds its first conference– and challenges the oralist Goliath



Deaf Life PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Deaf Bilingual Coalition has taken a strong stand against what they call the Alexander Graham Bell Association's long history of disseminating "misinformation and deception" to parents of deaf children. They have had to deal with alarmist responses from AGBell: warning their conference attendees not to engage in dialogue with DBC supporters, closing off a public skywalk between hotels that would have made it easier for their attendees to visit DBC sessions (and then claiming that it was the hotel's decision), and calling for extra police support in case the DBCers got, you know, *emotional*—and the DBC has been as notably well-behaved, friendly, and dignified a group as you could hope to see.

So the AGBell brass were worried about the DBCers turning violent? AGBell has a history of mistreating the "opposition." Perhaps you've read about DBC Core Team member Barbara DiGiovanni's daughter, Brianna, who, at last year's AGBell conference in Alexandria, Virginia, had a batch of flyers ripped out of her hand by Jenny Botero, a furious hotel executive acting on behalf of AGBell? And did you know that the unapologetic Botero got hired by the White House a few months later?

We're pleased to see that Deaf and hearing allies are finally standing up to AGBell and challenging its strategies in a visible but positive and peaceful way.

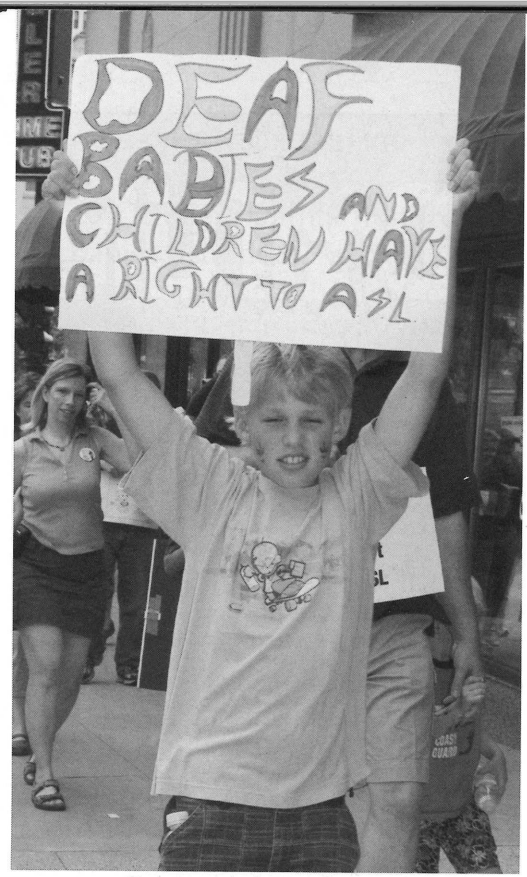
NTID is celebrating its 40th anniversary this fall. It began as "the Grand Experiment," a federally-funded solution to the problem of deaf people's chronic under-employment—which was an outgrowth of the long-term oralist stranglehold on education of the deaf. Its mission, as we've noted, embraces all forms of communication, modes, and audiometric options. It's a community where all deaf people have a place and a future.

Matthew Moore

Deaf Life CHART

Our cover story

The *First National Deaf Bilingual Coalition Education Conference* was held June 27-30, in Milwaukee, adjacent to and concurrent with the AGBell conference. It was free and open to all. Despite the spin the media put on it, DBC's focus is not on fighting pediatric cochlear implants (which AGBell aggressively promotes) but a deaf child's right to *immediate* access to sign language. Several hundred people attended—an extraordinarily high turnout for a Deaf Community conference. **32**



Cover and above photos: Rex Barlow

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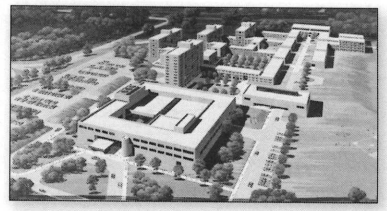
IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

Our coverage of NTID's 40th anniversary continues with an illustrated historical retrospective/timeline, an interview with Dr. Robert Frisina, and more.



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Another view on Joe Fischgrund: "Thanks a million!"

Because of Mr. Fischgrund's dedication to his job, the school board, faculty, staff, parents, and most importantly the students, is the reason that PSD is still alive today. Not only is PSD standing strong at the present moment, but because of Mr. Fischgrund's tireless effort, PSD's future is as bright as ever. *THANKS A MILLION*, Mr. Fischgrund.

Joe Barrett
PE Teacher
Pennsylvania School for the Deaf
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Editors reply: *We wish both Dr. Fischgrund and Dr. Taub rewarding, action-packed adventures!*

On ototoxic chemotherapy

I'm grateful that the RNID [Royal National Institute for Deaf People] have made known the fact, as the press reported on 10 October 05, that hundreds of babies, children, and adults are made profoundly deaf each year by chemotherapy cancer drugs. [The RNID has appealed] to drug companies to develop less toxic versions of drugs, as they are dragging their feet on this. [See *http://www.rnid.org.uk/mediacentre/press/2005/cancer_patients_hearing.htm.*] Platinum-based chemotherapy (such as the drug Cisplatin) is used in a third of cases and can cause deafness.

In the 21st century it's surely time we had cancer treatments that don't damage normal healthy cells. Billions of pounds have been donated to cancer research for decades. We need kinder, gentler treatments that don't make patients lose all their hair or suffer permanent deafness from these toxic drugs.

A. Wills
Ruislip, Middlesex, England

Deaf Life MAIL

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FOR HEARING PEOPLE ONLY

On what basis do parents of newly-diagnosed deaf babies commit to a particular approach?

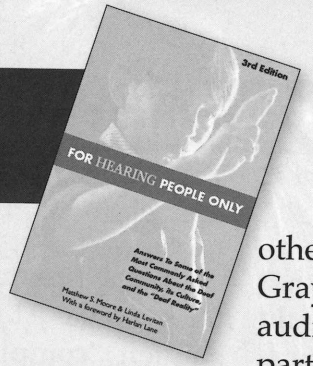
Much depends on the background, personalities, values, beliefs, and prejudices of the parents. Their pre-existing feelings about sign language (if they have them) are significant. Who gets first contact with the parents is of crucial importance.

The vast majority of hearing parents consider hearing and speech the norm—it's their experience, and they want their deaf child to fit into their world, to enjoy the same advantages they do, to be like them. But does their vision encompass, or leave the possibility open for, a different way of communicating from what they're used to? Whether they learn to accept and respect the child's "different-ness" is a key factor. Some do; many don't.

Hospitals and clinics typically provide referrals—and these, as we know, aren't necessarily objective. But parents aren't always "recruited" by the cochlear-implant industry. Sometimes they voluntarily establish contact. They've already made a choice.

As we've noted, a diagnosis of deafness hits most hearing parents hard. They're shocked, they're in emotional turmoil, they go through the documented stages of grief.

Having to commit to an approach can be an emotionally agonizing experience, especially when there's so much pressure on parents to commit to the full oralist *shtick*: cochlear implants, Auditory/Verbal Therapy, and oral/mainstream placements. The "experts" warn parents that denying their children "the opportunity to hear" is a selfish and heartless choice, tantamount to abuse, as their decision is irrevocable and consigns the children to



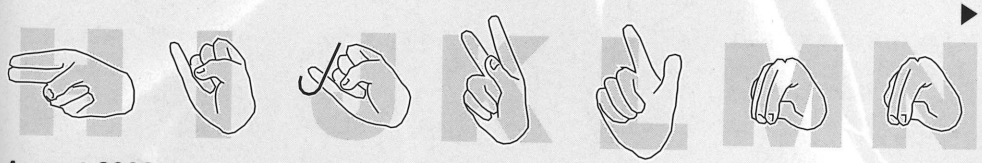
limited enjoyment of the world, socialization, employment, and futures. The parents may not be aware of the sleazier aspects of implant evangelism—e.g., kickbacks for surgeons. Is this more ethical than a refusal to implant? The implant-ethics debate rages on—with no resolution in sight.

We support a Bilingual-Bicultural (or ASL/English Bilingual, to use the official term) approach. But what about the parents, equally loving, educated, and concerned about their children's well-being, who take (and remain on) the "opposite" track?

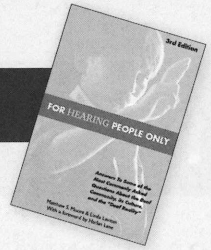
Their accounts are easy to come by. Several have written books about their experiences, and there are numerous magazine articles, Websites, and blogs. One instructive example is Daphne Gray's memoir, **Yes, You Can, Heather** (1995). As with so many other parents of deaf children, Gray received the news from an audiologist. He told her (and pay particular attention to the choice of words): "As a profoundly deaf person, your daughter probably won't develop much verbal speech. Most children with her degree of deafness use sign language rather than speak. When it's time for her to go to school,

Parents are told that vetoing cochlear implants consigns their children to a restricted, second-class future.

she will probably need to attend a special school such as the Alabama School for the Deaf in Talladega. You can reasonably expect her to achieve maybe a third-grade education. So eventually you'll need to look at some sort of vocational training . . ." Note the linkage of profound deafness, poor speech skills, signing, a "special school," and low academic expectations.



FOR HEARING PEOPLE ONLY



Why have so many audiologists claimed that deaf people could not achieve more than a third-grade-level education? Why the gloomy prognosis? Because of the lasting, and destructive, effects of the deaf-ed tradition, which was for so many years controlled by oralism! Yet the advocates of oralism claim that it frees deaf children from low expectations and gives them access to an unlimited, wide-open future.

The traditional low academic expectations for deaf children are a legacy of the oralist deaf-ed system.

On the audiologist's advice to give Heather immediate exposure to language, Gray made a brief foray into signing, with a Signing Exact English storybook. She was dismayed to see that Heather enjoyed the signs but didn't vocalize. She then observed ASL, TC, and oral programs in the Tallahassee area. At the ASL program, she felt "completely left out—as if I'd walked into a silent and alien world." She felt somewhat more comfortable in the TC program, but still believed that there was too much reliance on signing and not enough oral practice. After rejecting Cued Speech, she observed acoupedics (AVT), was impressed with the easy, natural quality of the children's speech, and committed to it. She flew to Denver to learn about AVT at Doreen Pollack's clinic, and met Pollack herself.

She immediately rejected the possibility of enrolling Heather at AIDB—she didn't even bother visiting it. She preferred to keep Heather in public-school programs with an acoupedic IEP. Any attempts on Heather's part to use the signs she picked up at her local deaf-ed program were firmly squelched at home. Eight grueling years later, when she was 11, Heather was assessed at Central Institute for the Deaf as having severe language deficiencies, and Gray reluctantly enrolled her there, although CID, then under Jean Moog's direction, didn't follow the acoupedic model.

We suspect that Heather would have ultimately picked up good speech patterns—and experienced a lot less frustration—had Gray embraced signing. But she believed, as so many parents do, that spoken language should come first. Heather ultimately learned to sign, but continued to communicate with Gray, who remained a nonsigner, solely in speech.

It's not that uncommon for parents, dissatisfied with the approach they'd originally committed to, to switch to another. Most often, the switch is made from an oral program to one that embraces signing. When the parents see how their child's language skills are lagging further and further behind their hearing peers, and the oral program they're in offers no flexibility because its focus is solely on speech and auditory skills, the parents are often motivated to take drastic steps. Naturally, we don't hear about this from the oralist-media network.

It *is* possible to combat the stereotype of lowered expectations without buying into the oralist line. Nor does one have to accept their argument that deaf children learn language best, and succeed academically, with cochlear implants and AVT, and that to refuse to take this route is to cheat them of a fulfilling future.

The key is commitment—for parents to network, get actively involved with their children's education, and become educated and assertive advocates, as Gray herself did for AVT. That's something that we've noticed successful oral-deaf children have in their favor—super-committed, fervently involved parents. ASL-supportive parents can and should do likewise—advocate, be visible, use the media.

It's up to our community to get the word out, and to ensure that parents know that there *is* a *real* choice—and a desirable alternative to the more heavily promoted, trafficked, and media-hyped route. ■

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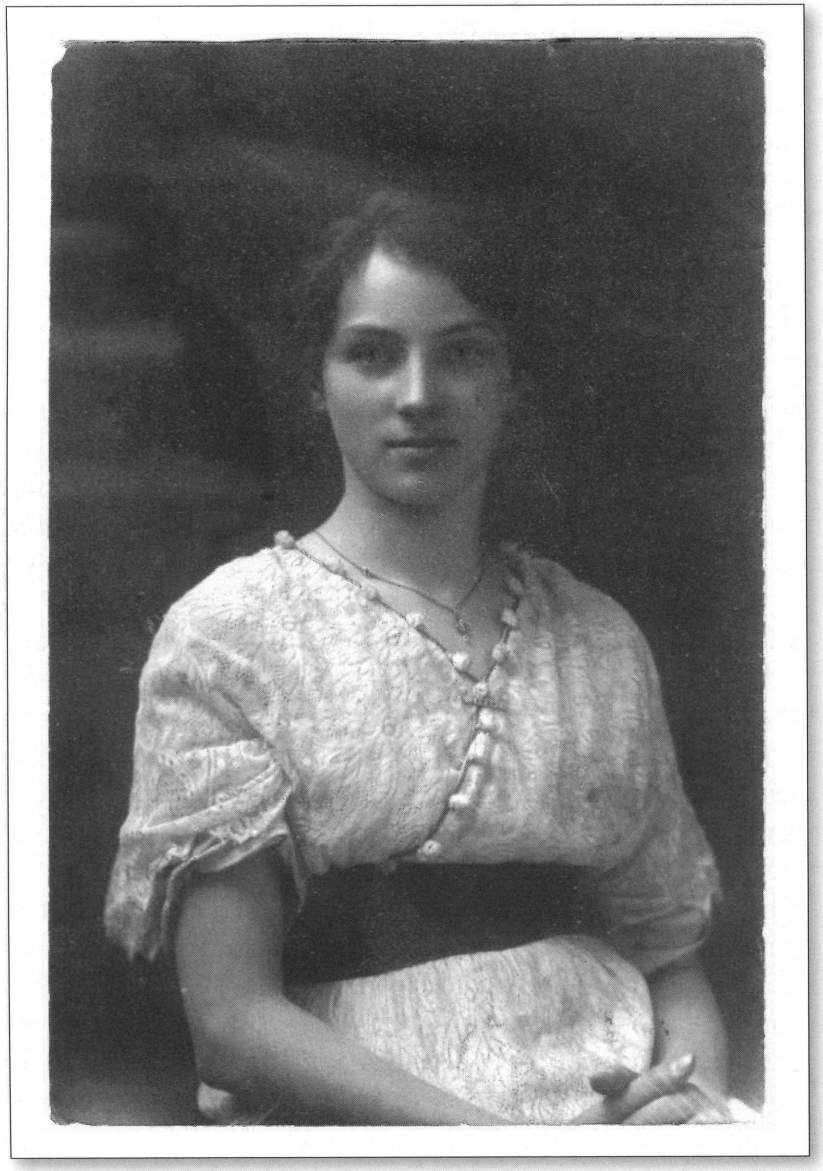


This charming portrait of a young, serenely beautiful Olive Rawlings dates to around World War I, and may commemorate her high-school graduation. Since she didn't like to be photographed, very few pictures of her exist.

Olive Rawlings Swindells

July 29, 1900—March 16, 1995

The secret sharer

In late December 1995, Olive R. Swindells, who had died earlier in the year, made national headlines. Through savvy investments in the stock market, she had become a millionaire. Her fortune consisted of holdings in 55 stocks in accounts at brokerages in Baltimore and Florida, a safe-deposit box, bank accounts, U.S. Treasury notes, and real estate. From this, she made a surprise $3-million-plus bequest to Gallaudet University—the largest single bequest received from an individual in its history, all the more astonishing because neither she nor her husband had any connection with Gallaudet. No one there had ever met them. No one knows if they ever visited.

Who was Olive Swindells, anyway? How did she amass such a fortune? And why did she bequeath most of it to Gallaudet?

Little is known about her. She was born to Suzy and Cecil Rawlings, and grew up in Canandaigua, New York, in the Finger Lakes District. According to her attorney, Bruce E. Goodman, she was from a merchant family; a grandfather had worked as a "drummer" (traveling salesman) during the last quarter of the 19th century.

Having moved to Maryland in the 1930s, she worked as office manager for a man involved with the Manhattan Project (the top-secret development of the atomic bomb) at Johns Hopkins University during World War II. A certificate dated August 6, 1945 (the day that Hiroshima was bombed) was issued to her in recognition of her work. A set of yellowed business cards found in her hoard indicated that she had been a stockbroker with the long-defunct Maryland firm of Vickers Brothers. She was late-deafened, managing nicely with a hearing aid. She drove a 1990 Chevrolet Cavalier almost to the end of her life. On March 16, 1995, she suffered a fatal stroke as she was preparing her tax records for her accountant.

She was a divorcée when she

married Bertram L. Swindells, a native of England, draftsman and civil engineer for Baltimore County, in 1945. He was profoundly deaf, and towards the end of his life, became incapacitated. He died on December 27, 1994, at age 86. He and Olive were devoted to each other. They had no children or known surviving relatives.

For more than 50 years, they had lived on Bert's modest salary in a small, 2-story, 8-room, rundown Victorian house on Bedford Road in the Lochearn subdivision, in the northwestern outskirts of Baltimore. The house was variously described in newspaper reports as "modest," "crumbling," and "decrepit."

Even though they were millionaires, Olive and Bert Swindells lived like misers. They hoarded junk—newspapers, clippings, magazines, empty cans, milk jugs, bottles, boxes. Their front yard was so overgrown that the house wasn't visible from the street.

The Swindellses had one luxury: a solidly-constructed ranch-style summer house in Naples Park, Florida, near the beach. Like the Lochearn house, it was a packrat's nest—thoroughly crammed with ceiling-high stacks of newspapers and magazines, including two years' worth of **Wall Street Journal**. (Olive also subscribed to **Forbes**.) The Swindellses left it for the last time in 1991, intending to return shortly, but never did.

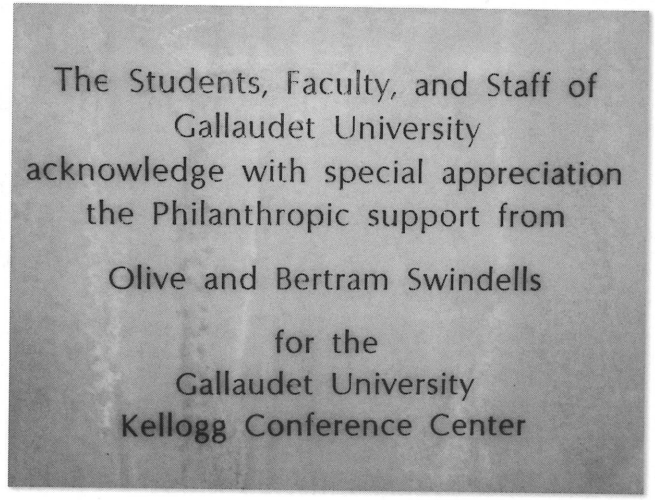
Intensely private and quiet, Olive Swindells, as Michael James of the **Baltimore Sun** put it, "spent most of her life avoiding the rest of the world." She didn't socialize. She was friendly with a few of her neighbors, coming over on rare occasions for bridge, but never let anyone into her house.

Goodman believed that she was probably penniless when she married Bert, but through shrewd investments in strong companies (H&R Block being her top holding), built up a stock portfolio worth some $4.4 to $4.8 million.

"She was a very private person, very independent," Goodman told a reporter. "She didn't strike me as eccentric. She was very serious-minded. She invested in everything, and on her own. She had neither a broker nor a financial planner. And she kept her interest in the market until the end of her life. Months after her death, my firm was still receiving prospectuses she had requested be sent to her."

When she drew up her will, she made Gallaudet University the main beneficiary of her estate—something she had planned for years. As Jacques Steinberg noted in the **New York Times**, "[I]ts mission was apparently close to her heart."

There was a legal wrinkle, though: she designated 20% of her estate—some $800,000—to the "DAR Nursing Home" in Maryland—a nonexistent institution. The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) is a well-known organization; Swindells maintained a long-term on-and-off affiliation with it. When Goodman informed her that the Maryland chapter of DAR didn't maintain any nursing homes for its destitute members, she replied that in that case, she wanted to leave her complete residuary estate to Gallaudet, for endowed scholarships only. Goodman accordingly prepared a revised will, but Mrs. Swindells died before she could sign it. (Thus, he notes, Gallaudet wasn't bound by her wishes.)



The commemorative plaque marking GUKCC's Swindells Auditorium

DAR asserted its claim for the 20% of the estate. Goodman and the DAR went to court in 1996 to sort matters out, and the ruling was that Gallaudet was entitled to the complete estate. Its attorneys made a settlement with the DAR to avoid further appeals.

Part of Mrs. Swindells's bequest was used for the construction of the Kellogg Conference Center, dedicated in October 1996. The GUKCC auditorium is named in the Swindellses' honor, as is an endowed-scholarship fund.

The rest remains a mystery. ■

Deaf Life Photo of Olive Rawlings courtesy of Bruce E. Goodman; plaque photo, Gallaudet U. Archives. Thanks to Mr. Goodman and Michael J. Olson.

She gave Gallaudet University its biggest surprise ever

Deaf Person of the Month

John Egbert

Founder of the Deaf Bilingual Coalition

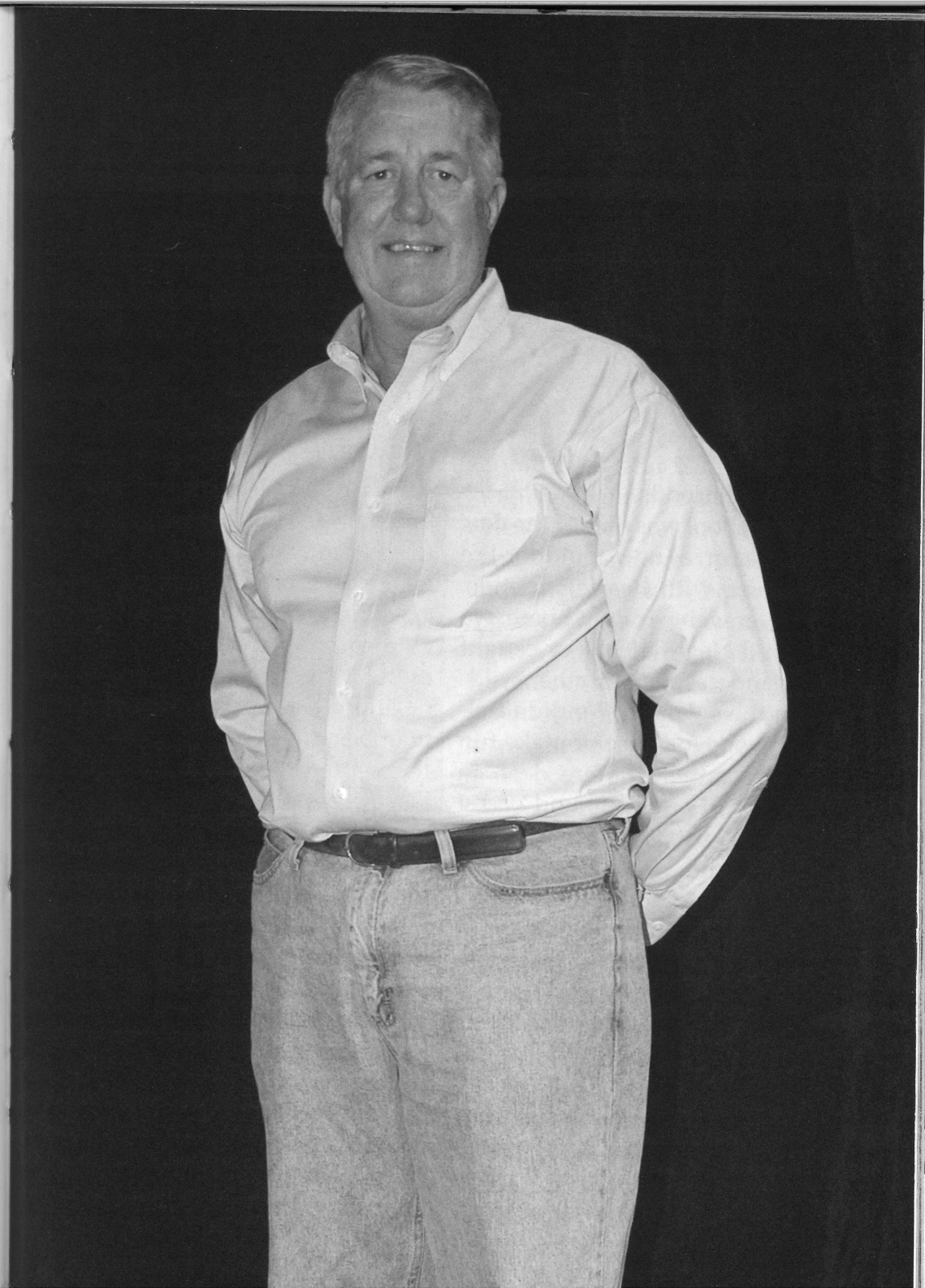
I was born to hearing parents in Jackson, Mississippi, and have a deaf brother, Billy, 20 months older. At age 3 or 4, I was enrolled in the oral Chinchuba School for the Deaf in Marrero, near New Orleans, Louisiana. I was their poster child. On most Fridays, the school gave public demonstrations to hearing audiences.

I did all right at Chinchuba. The teacher stationed me at the blackboard at the back of the classroom, writing down numbers in order from 1 to 1000, and doing multiplication tables over and over from 1 x 1 = 1 all the way to 9 x 9 = 81, while she taught the others. Later, I understood why. It took the teachers longer to communicate with the other students because the strict-oral method wasn't easy for them. Even though I had a 75-decibel loss, I had the talent of picking up what the teachers were saying.

After I finished third grade, my parents transferred me to a hearing Catholic school—with no support services. No longer a poster child, I became an instant nobody. The teaching method there was intense; it was a different world from what I was used to at Chinchuba. I missed a lot of what the teachers were saying because I wasn't able to speechread all the time. I started losing interest in school.

After 45 days of this, my parents had me transferred to the public John Davison School in Algiers, just across the river from New Orleans. I had to start third grade over again. A special-ed teacher worked with 8 or so deaf students from different grade levels in one class, mostly in speech.

Billy and I commuted to school everyday by two buses, a ferry across the Mississippi, and Canal Street trolley. We didn't get much help from our parents. We stuck together, and were self-motivated and happy. I was very extroverted, never a loner like so many



Addressing a large, enthusiastic crowd at the DBC rally.

of my oral friends.

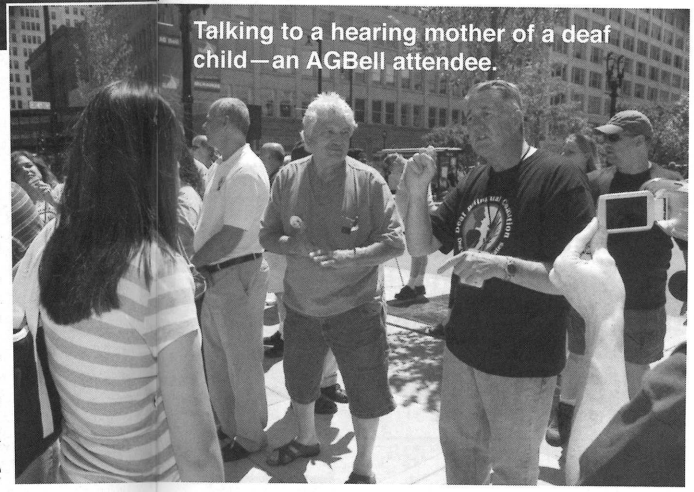
After school was out for the day, we'd begin a new outdoor-life adventure with hearing friends. We never went straight home; we explored New Orleans or caught water moccasins and other wildlife in the swamps. We didn't allow anyone to abuse or make fun of us because we were deaf, in school or in our neighborhood. I enjoyed constructing things like underground foxholes, motorized go-carts, and tree houses.

When my family moved back to Jackson after my fifth-grade year, I continued in public schools until 11th grade, and entered Gallaudet College, where I first learned ASL.

At first, I didn't think that sign language was equal to verbal communication. After I learned genuine ASL (not just signed words in English order), I began to understand. Learning ASL changed my life. It was the first time in my life that I was able to have free, "normal" interactive communication with another human being. At Gallaudet, I accepted myself as a Deaf person and became much happier.

I married a Gallaudet classmate from North Dakota. We raised two Deaf children, Clyde and Stella. As a parent, I became actively involved with our children's education, and increasingly concerned about Deaf education in general. I began to realize that the parents who dominated deaf education were "oralized." They were "educated" that the oral-only method was the best way to raise deaf children, same as my parents believed.

I wanted the Deaf school that Clyde and Stella attended to have ASL classes because nearly 70% of the students enrolled there came from mainstreamed backgrounds and most of them didn't know any sign language at all. They learned it from their peers instead of their teachers. That was the most ironic ideology I could imagine—having a deaf school in a sign-language setting not having *any* sign-language courses for these kids! The school offered no fewer than *five* speech classes, and my children told me that nearly all of their classmates hated it because it was a waste of time, and resented being taken out of their academic classes for it. They wanted more education, not more speech training.



Talking to a hearing mother of a deaf child—an AGBell attendee.

When the superintendent told me that the hearing parents were the dominant force in deaf education, I knew something was very wrong, nationwide. This wasn't just a local situation, a single school or county—it was happening all over the country!

It motivated me to write a novel, **MindField**, to spread the word about how hearing parents can learn about ASL, how it should be a deaf baby's primary language from the start, and enables them to get an immediate start on cognitive development and language skills before learning anything else, even speech.

Then I realized that **MindField** would not likely be read by the majority of those whom I wanted to reach, so I decided to start a grassroots movement to publicize the fact that Deaf babies need exposure to a visual language to develop communication and cognitive skills, to learn how to learn. I also wanted to raise public awareness that organizations such as AGBell and AVT need to stop banning and discouraging sign language between the ages of 0 to 3, which is the most critical stage of mental and language development. ■

Deaf Life Photos by Rex Barlow

August

Dates to remember from our Deaf History

2 1922

Alexander Graham Bell (b. 3/3/1847) died in Beinn Bhreagh, Nova Scotia, of anemia and diabetes. (Ironically enough, his final communication with his oral-deaf wife Mabel was in fingerspelling and signs—he died signing.) By the time of his death, the "oralist wave" was at its peak—virtually all schools for the deaf in the U.S. had banned signing from their classrooms, established a rigid and repressive pure-oral curriculum of speech and speechreading, with compulsory use of amplifying headphones, segregation of signing and oral students, and near-complete replacement of deaf teachers with hearing ones. Although Bell didn't quite succeed in his declared goal of assimilating deaf people completely into hearing society by dismantling the foundations of Deaf culture, his influence was tremendous. He has had a long-lasting, and negative, impact on Deaf history.

4 1939

Bonnie Poitras Tucker born in Springfield, Massachusetts. Attended mainstream schools. Earned a B.S. in Journalism from Syracuse University in 1961. Beginning her studies at Arizona State University College of Law as a 37-year-old "displaced housewife" with three children, Tucker was warned that it would be impossible to become a lawyer—which made her all the more determined to succeed. She received her J.D. from University of Colorado in 1980. She has had a distinguished career as a litigation attorney and law professor at ASU, CU, and several other colleges and universities in and outside the U.S.A. A staunch oralist and excellent speechreader (now with a cochlear implant), she is also an expert on disability law, having written and published several books and numerous articles and treatises.

6 1870

Francis Perew Gibson (d. 12/4/1929), born in Chicago. Deafened at age 8, he attended public schools. Appointed president of the National Fraternal Society of the Deaf in 1903, on the day he joined, "Gib," as he was known, cleaned up the graft-ridden organization. That battle against corruption cost him his presidency, but he served as the Frat's first full-time salaried officer, Grand Secretary, from 1909 to 1927, then was elected president again. He reorganized, expanded, and enriched NFSD, founded its official publication, **The Frat**, and defended the right of deaf people to drive. The official cause of his death (following a gallstone operation) was a blood clot; friends believed that worry and overwork were the real causes.

19 1900

Emerson Romero (d. 10/16/1972) born in Havana, Cuba. Deafened at age 6, he attended Wright Oral School, Stuyvesant High, and mainstream colleges. He worked as a silent-film actor for Pan-American Pictures Company (owned by his brother Dorian), using the screen name "Tommy Albert" (1926-28). The two-reel silent comedies Romero starred in—***Beach-nuts***, ***The Cat's Meow*** **(*La Chica del Gato*)**, ***Sappy Days***, ***Great Guns***, and ***Hen-Pecked in Morocco***—are presumed lost. After the advent of the "talkies," he returned to the U.S.A. Starting a new career at Republic Aviation, he organized Theatre Guild of the Deaf, performed in local Deaf-club theaters, and began his pioneering captioning experiments in 1947, splicing in captions between frames of purchased films, then distributing them to Deaf clubs and schools. His efforts ultimately led to the establishment of the federal Captioned Films for the Deaf program.

Deaf Almanac

August

Dates to remember from our Deaf History

24 1965

Marlee Matlin, actress, born in Morton, Illinois. Fearless, feisty, opinionated, insisting on taking risks (including occasional speaking roles), Matlin has established an impressive career in Hollywood. The youngest actress to win an Oscar (for her portrayal of Sarah Norman in the movie version of ***Children of a Lesser God)***, she also collected Golden Globes. She continues to guest-star on TV dramas, and made a noteworthy appearance on ABC's smash-hit reality series, ***Dancing with the Stars***. While living a busy life as a mother of three daughters, she has also been a noteworthy advocate for a variety of causes ranging from captioning to AIDS research.

25 1880

The National Convention of Deaf-Mutes convened in Cincinnati for three days—August 25 through 27, 1880—the birth of the National Association of the Deaf. (This was just a few weeks before the infamous Congress of Milan signaled the ascendance of oralism.) Co-founders included Edmund Booth, Robert P. McGregor, and Edwin A. Hodgson. McGregor (1849-1926) became the NAD's first president. The NAD continues its advocacy of the interests of the Deaf community.

27 1920

At 6' 3", Earl Roberts, Jr. (d. 3/22/1975) was the tallest member of the Blue Bisons basketball squad, but a "late bloomer." One of the Five Iron Men who won the Mason-Dixon Tournament of 1943, he became a legendary football and track coach at Michigan School for the Deaf. MSD's Roberts Athletic Field is named in his honor.

27 1952

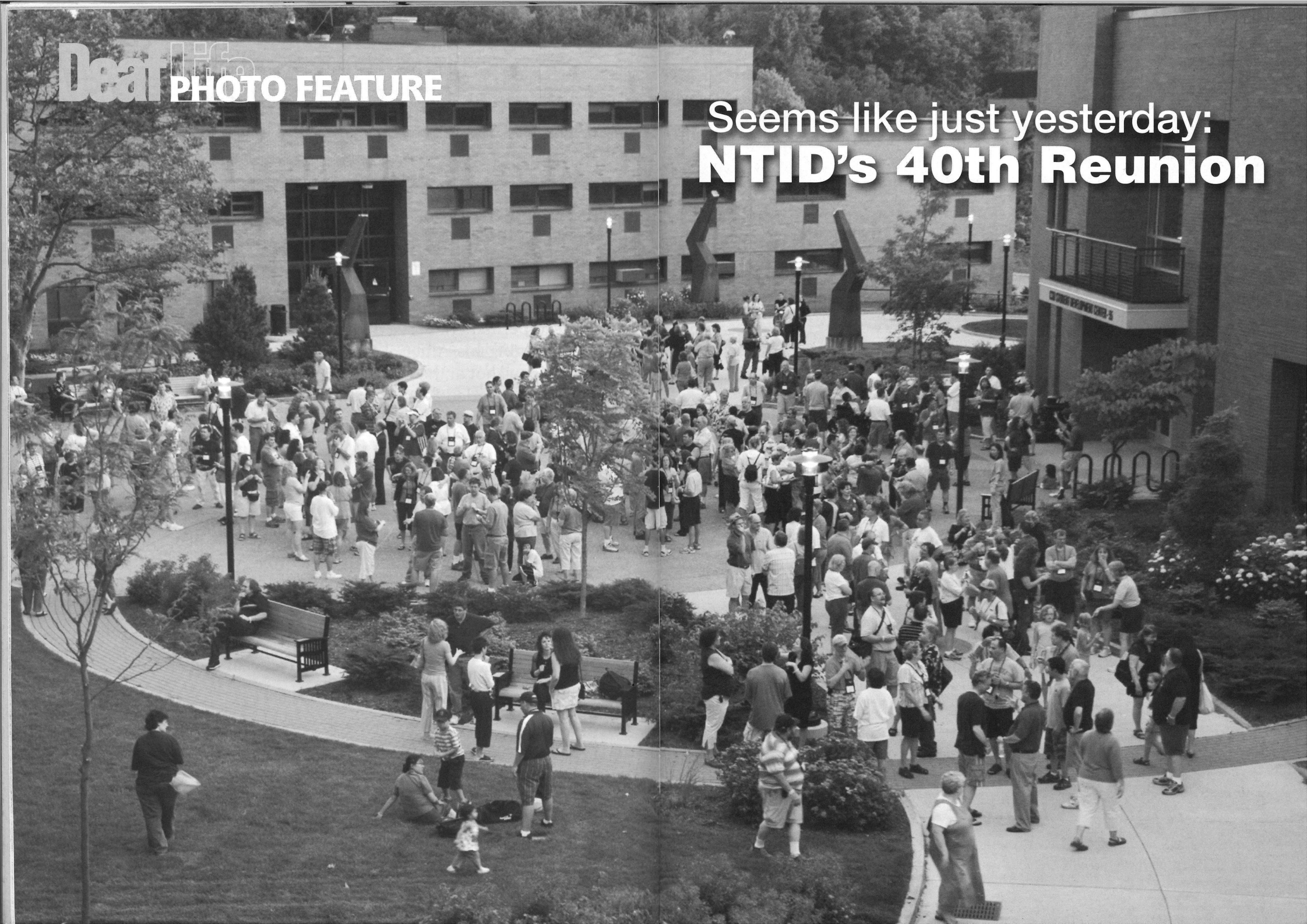
On this day in 1952, Eugene "Silent" Hairston (b. 7/23/1930) fought Carl "Bobo" Olson. In the fourth round, Hairston sustained a severe gash to the socket over his right eye (detail at right). Although bleeding profusely, he continued to fight until the bout was stopped. He lost on a TKO. The injury caused permanent nerve damage, blurred vision, and a drooping eyelid—bringing his American boxing career to an end, along with his hopes for a shot at the Middleweight title. He was unsuccessful in getting his suspended boxing license reinstated. After fighting—and losing—one bout in Paris, he retired from competition altogether.

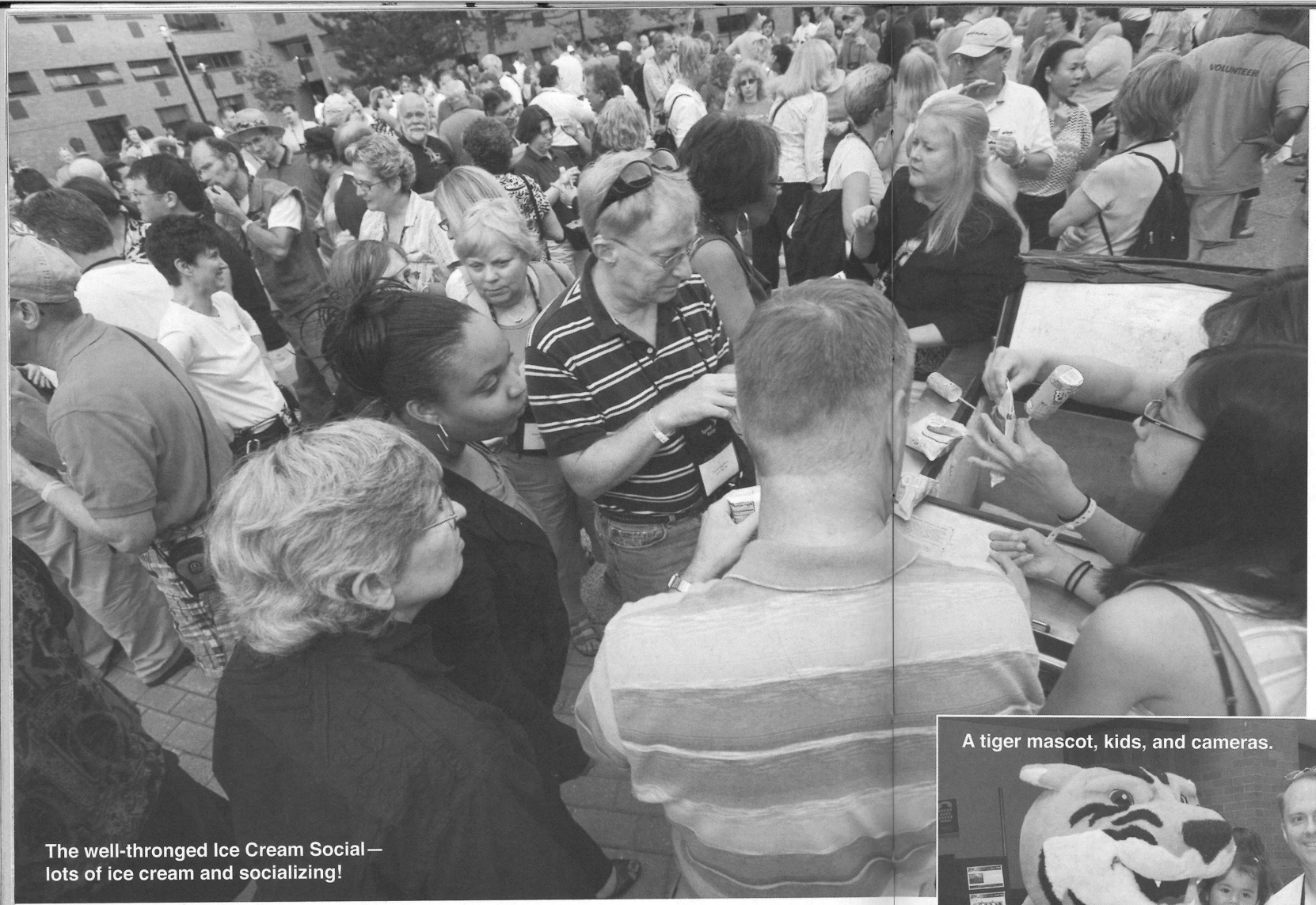
31 1663

Guillaume Amontons (d. 10/11/1705), physicist, born in Paris. He devised an improved version of Galileo's thermometer, contributed to meteorology, especially with the construction of a more accurate barometer, made discoveries about gases and geology, and did pioneering work in thermodynamics. Much of his work formed the foundation for later discoveries by Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit and Lord Kelvin. A crater on the moon is named in his honor.

Major sources: Jack R. Gannon, **Deaf Heritage: A Narrative History of Deaf America** (1980), Harry G. Lang, **Silence of the Spheres: the Deaf Experience in the History of Science** (1994); Harry G. Lang and Bonnie Meath-Lang, **Deaf Persons in the Arts and Sciences: a Biographical Dictionary** (1995); Matthew S. Moore and Robert F. Panara, **Great Deaf Americans: the Second Edition** (1996); Deborah Meranski Sonnenstrahl, **Deaf Artists in America: Colonial to Contemporary** (2002). **Photo credits:** A.G. Bell—National Geographic Society. Bonnie Poitras Tucker—Dr. Tucker. Marlee Matlin—Showtime. Robert McGregor, Earl Roberts—Gallaudet University Archives. Eugene Hairston—UPI.

Seems like just yesterday: NTID's 40th Reunion





The well-thronged Ice Cream Social—lots of ice cream and socializing!

NTID held its 40th Anniversary Reunion from Thursday, June 26, through Saturday, June 28. The theme was "Remember, Rediscover, Reconnect." More than 700 people attended, including the Pioneers (NTID's first graduating class, 1968), and Ultimate Fighting Champion Matt Hamill (a pioneer of a different sort).

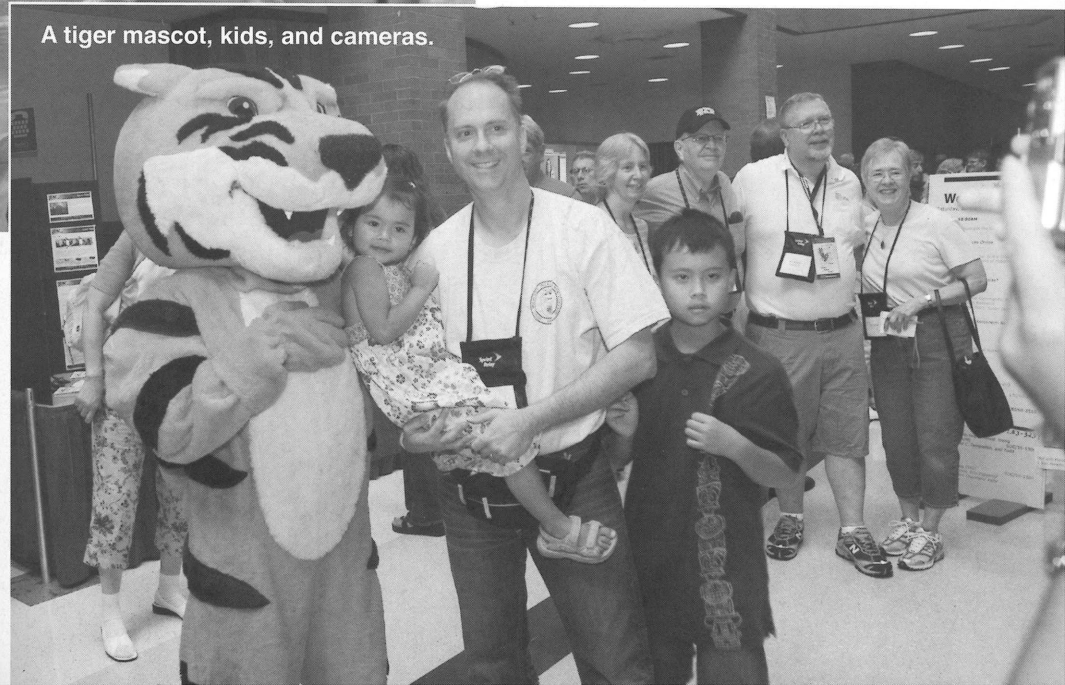
Alumni who graduated during the 1980s and even the 1990s, and hadn't been back since, marveled at the tremendous changes that have been made on campus—new buildings everywhere!

A brief rundown of a few of the activities:

Thursday-Saturday—product demonstrations, vendors' tables, and special exhibits (including a video history) in the Dyer Arts Center. (A number of alumni had never before seen the gallery, which opened in Fall 2001.)

Thursday—9th Alumni Golf Tournament at Wild Wood Country Club in Rush, and an ice-cream social on the Frisina Quad (between the LBJ, Student Life Center, and Peterson Hall). The social lasted well into the night.

Friday—workshops, Technical Labs open house, Reunion Luncheon, tours of Gordon Field House, trolley campus tours, Get Acquainted Reception (barbecue under a large tent), and Dessert



A tiger mascot, kids, and cameras.

Reception.

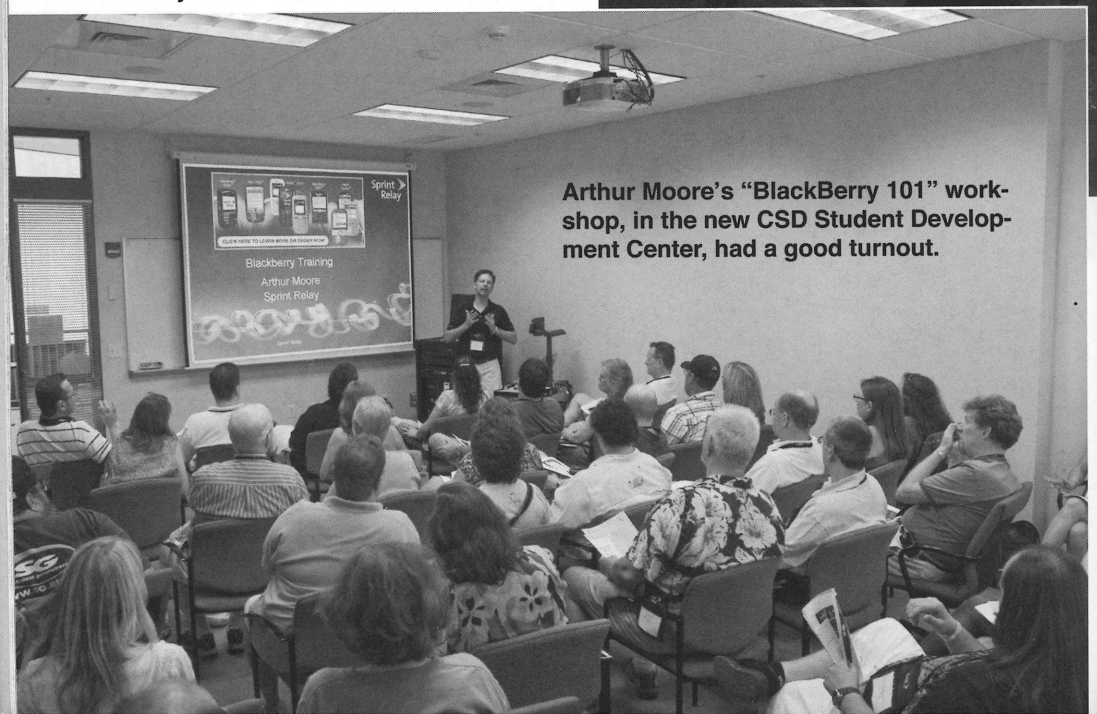
Saturday—disc golf, SVP group pictures, Special Interest Group/Affinity Hour, NTIDAA officers and chapter meetings, preview of Don Casper's upcoming documentary, ***Signs of the Time***, Reunion Dinner, Distinguished Alumni Award reception and Closing Ceremony, entertainment by C. J. Jones, "SVP Feud or Last Comic Standing." Jones was named "NTID Outstanding Alumnus."

Workshops covered various fields of interest—technology, ASL learning, careers, finance, employment, environmental awareness, aging, coping, and history—"How to Start Your Own Business," "Connecting Deaf Websites and ASL Classes," VRS, BlackBerries, instant messaging, audism, the loss of NTID's unique Social Work major, outreach, and (inevitably) cochlear implants.

And, oh yes, the ongoing discussion of the Dorm C situation—the official words is that "Bell Hall' is indeed going to be renamed.

As Dr. Hurwitz noted in a public post-reunion message, "I still find it hard to believe that we have current students whose parents graduated from RIT/NTID! And many of them are already grandparents!"

It *was* just yesterday, wasn't it? ■



Arthur Moore's "BlackBerry 101" workshop, in the new CSD Student Development Center, had a good turnout.

The Opening Ceremony was held on Thursday evening in the Panara Theatre.

Deaf Life Photo courtesy of NTID

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Deaf Trivia
fun & forgotten facts

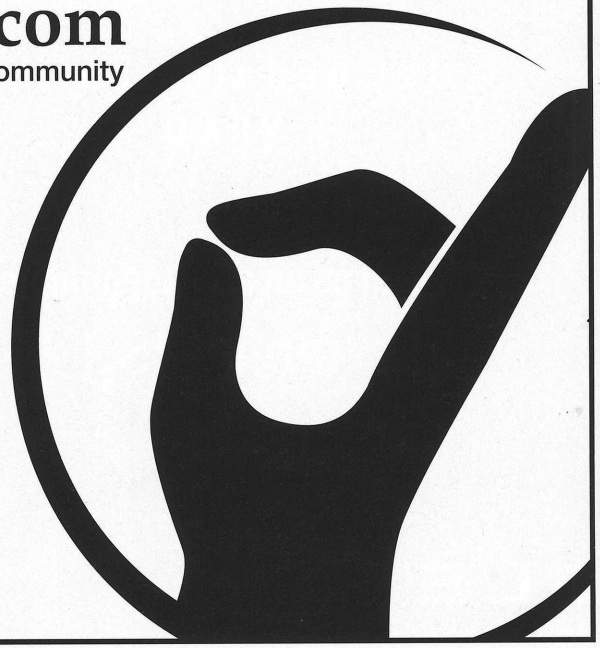
BRICK CITY BEAT

Rochester Institute of Technology, founded as the Rochester Athenaeum in 1829 and later renamed the Mechanics Institute, is the host institution of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf. What other colleges were interested in hosting NTID after it was established by legislation?

For answers, visit www.DeafTrivia.com!

www.deaf.com
Your gateway to the Deaf community

Our portal site for everyone. Fun, educational, and enlightening features. Check out our new DeafPeople.com galleries! We'll continue to expand, improve, and update our sites—part of our goal of serving the community.



DEAF JOBS

Looking for a job?
A job may be looking for you!

Employers:
Want to advertise job openings?
Seeking qualified applicants?

Jobseekers:
Switching career tracks?
Searching for a new position?

Check out
DeafJobs.com!

Brewing a challenge to A. G. Bell in Milwaukee

The Deaf Bilingual Coalition, not yet a year old, held its first national conference in late June—and made itself seen and heard

Jason Altman addresses the rally crowd. In the background are the Midwest Airlines Center, *AG-Bell Convention* attendees, and passers-by.

I have no doubt that all things have a use; and there may even be a use for the De l'Epée language of signs; but I do not think it is to be found in the instruction of the young. If use it has at all, it lies, I think, in the possibility of employing it as a means of reaching and benefiting adults who are unable to communicate with the hearing world. But this field of usefulness lies beyond our province as instructors of the young. We deal with children alone. The adults referred to represent our failures. Let us have as few of them as we possibly can.—Alexander Graham Bell, "The Utility of Signs in the Instruction of the Deaf," **Educator** (May 1894), Vol. V, 38-44*

It was only last summer (July 2007) that the Deaf Bilingual Coalition was formed. In the 11 months following its founding, the DBC experienced phenomenal growth, gaining members, support, and publicity (although the mainstream media didn't seem to understand what it was about), and making plans for its first conference.

The *First Annual DBC Education Conference* was held at the Hyatt Regency in Milwaukee from Friday, June 27 to Monday, June 30—concurrent with the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf's 48th Biennial Convention at Midwest Airlines Center next door.

While AGBell charged its attendees $400 and up, DBC's conference was free and open to all. It drew more than 400 attendees of all ages and colors, Deaf and hearing, including, according to DBC Core Team member Tami Hossler, "parents, community members, children, professionals, and ASL students." There was a large contingent of Canadians. All "remarked that a gathering like this was long overdue."

They attended and participated in conference sessions, including presentations conducted by scholars in the fields of American Sign Language, bilingual-bicultural studies, and early-language acquisition. Voice interpreters covered all sessions, so that nonsigners could understand everything. There were also organizational

Conference sessions were lively, informative, passionate (Carol Finkle described them as mind-blowing), and well-attended. Clockwise from top left: Barbara DiGiovanni, David O. Reynolds, Ruthie Jordan, and Ella Mae Lentz. Personal accounts were balanced with scholarship, research, and new findings in the fields of linguistics, culture, ASL, early education, and Deaf Studies.

meetings for existing DBC state chapters and people who wanted to start new ones. Child care was also provided.

Dr. Bobbie Beth Scoggins, NAD President, gave the keynote address. The DBC Core Team members—John Egbert, Ella Mae Lentz, David Eberwein, Barbara DiGiovanni, David O. Reynolds, and Tami Hossler—all addressed the crowd, and were cheered. The six presenters and titles of their presentations were:

Top: A glimpse of the large audience at the presentations in the Regency Ballroom. Bottom: CSUN Professors Patrick Boudreault and Genie Gertz presenting "The Emancipation of the Deaf-World from Audio-centric to Visual-centric Values."

• Dr. Barbara Kannapell, Assistant Professor in the Interpreter Preparation Program at the Community College of Baltimore County, Catonsville, Maryland: "Bilingual Education of Deaf Children: A Movement Begins"

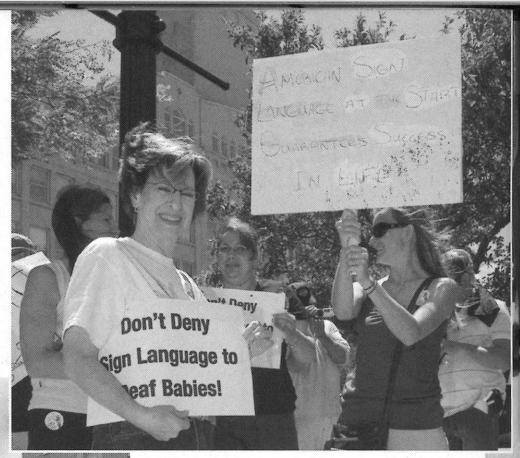
• Dr. Scoggins: "Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI), Deaf Babies, and Language Development: Where Have We Been and Where Are We Going?"

• MJ Bienvenu, Chair of he Department of ASL and Deaf Studies at Gallaudet University: "Bilingualism: Theories and Practice"

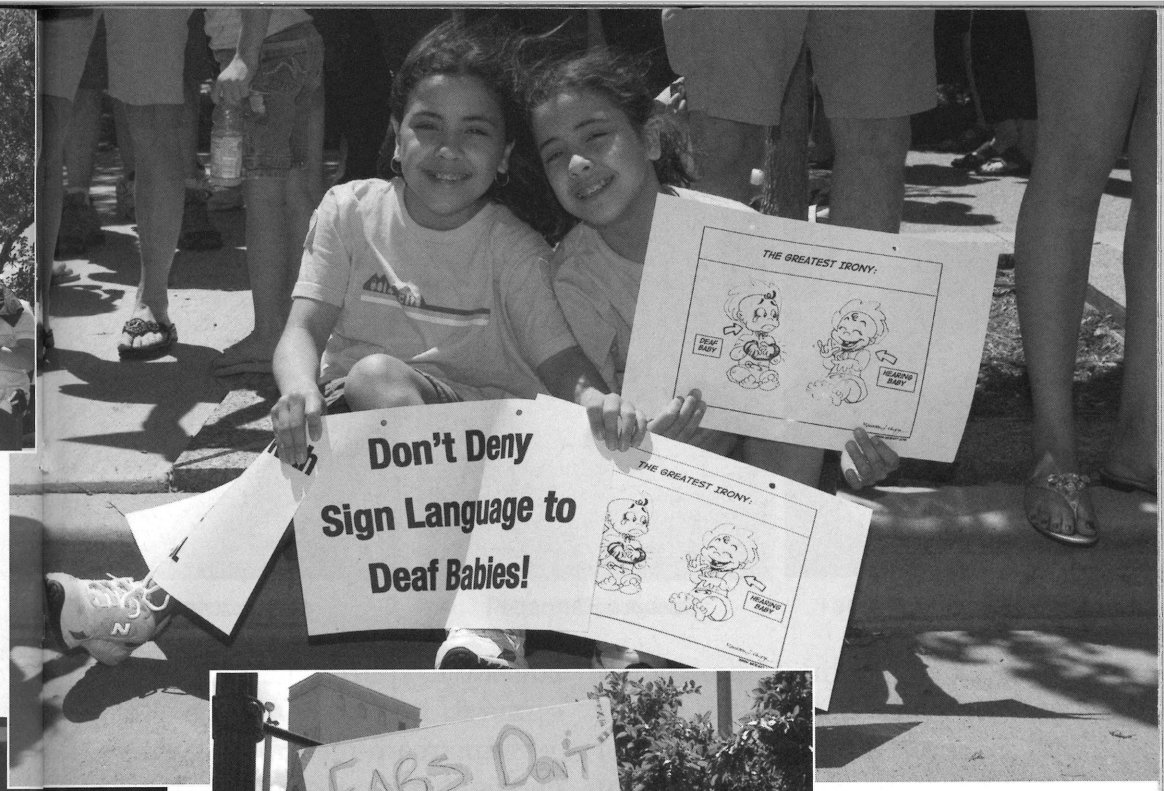
• Patrick Boudreault and Genie Gertz, Assistant Professors in the Department of Deaf Studies at CSUN: "The Emancipation of the

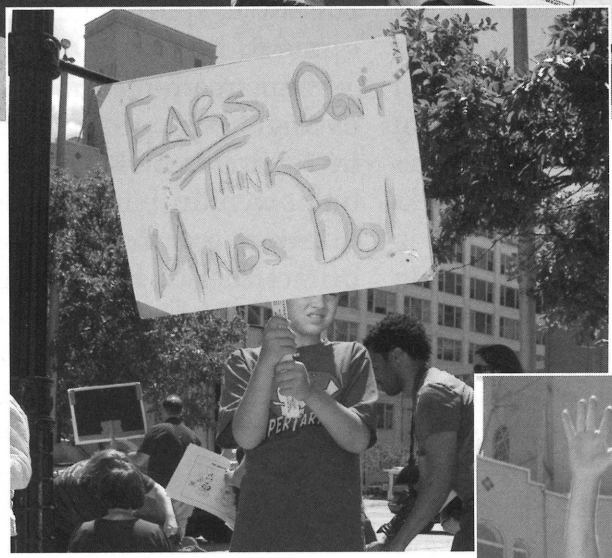
Sign language! These read "AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE AT THE START GUARANTEES SUCCESS IN LIFE" and "Don't Deny Sign Language to Deaf Babies."

Jason Altman and Kristen Marie Weiner lead the crowd in chanting "Let all Deaf children sign!"



Twin sisters hold signs featuring Maureen Klusza's now-classic cartoon, "The Greatest Irony," contrasting handcuffed deaf and freely-signing hearing babies.

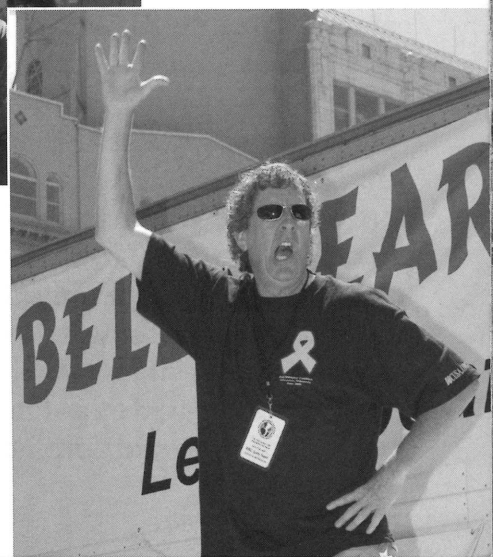


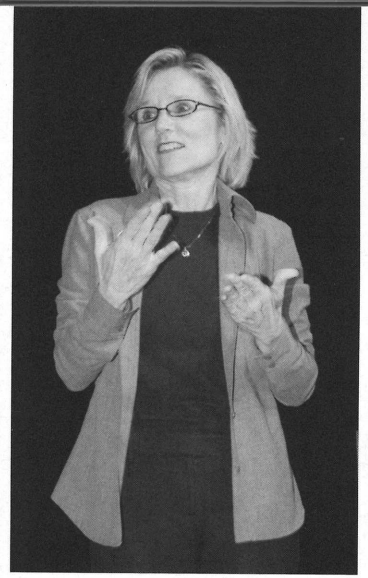


Participants carried professionally-printed signs—or made their own, like this emphatic one in bright orange letters: "EARS DON'T THINK—MINDS DO!"

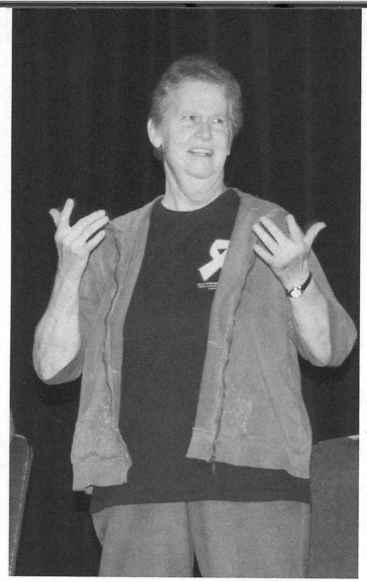
David O. Reynolds, who led the procession of rally participants, addresses the crowd in front of the banner.

John Egbert addresses the crowd. Across the street, in front of the Midwest Airlines Center, AGBell attendees and curious passers-by look on.

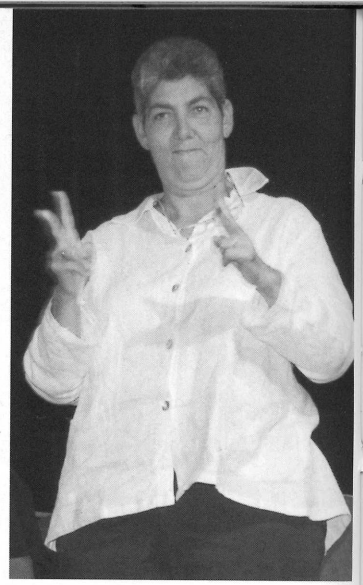




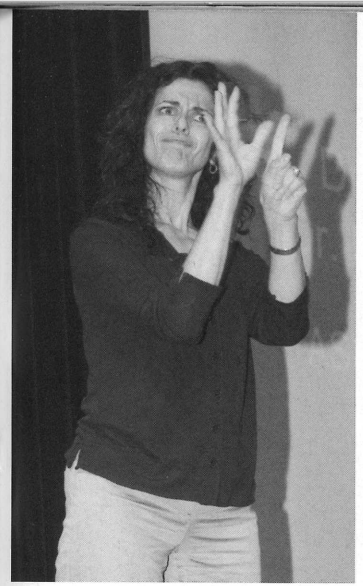
Bobbie Beth Scoggins



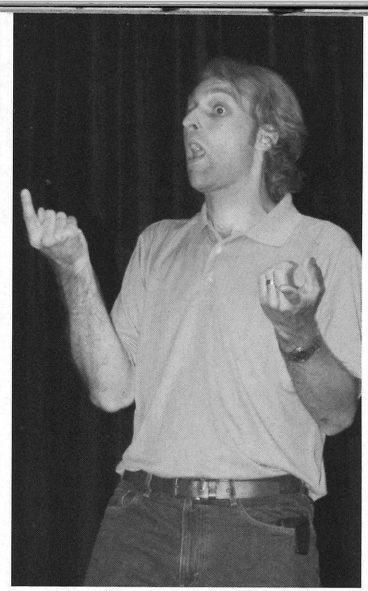
Barbara Kannapell



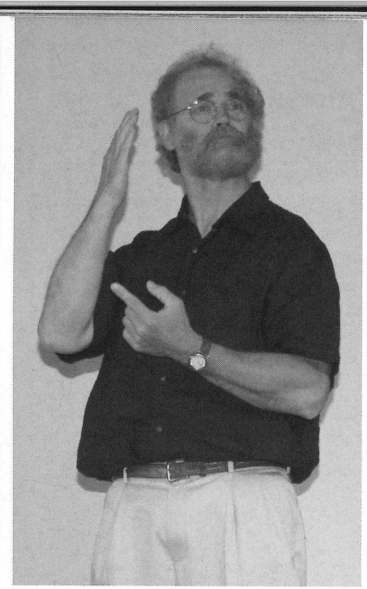
MJ Bienvenu



Genie Gertz



Patrick Boudreault



Marlon Kuntze

Deaf-World from Audio-centric to Visual-centric Values"

- Marlon Kuntze, Director of the Programs in Deaf Studies at Boston University: "The Story Behind Learning to Read"

A great throng participated in the noontime rallies on Saturday and Sunday. A "Blue Ribbon Ceremony" featured DeVIA (Deaf Art) slides and shared testimonies of oralist oppression—being denied exposure to ASL and the companionship, support, and mentoring of other Deaf people, mainstreamed isolation, not being able to learn ASL until later in life. Or, for parents, being discouraged from signing with their deaf children, with the "reason" being that it would hinder their cognitive/speech/literacy development.

Mainstream-media coverage, as might be expected, was biased in favor of AGBell, a 118-year-old, wealthy, influential organization, as evidenced by a lack of fact-checking and stating that the DBC's chief mission was opposition to cochlear implants. A Milwaukee **Journal Sentinel** writeup about the two conferences highlighted a local family whose three deaf children had implants and were being raised in a strict-oral milieu, but didn't describe any counterpart ASL-embracing families (as "balanced reportage" attempts to do).

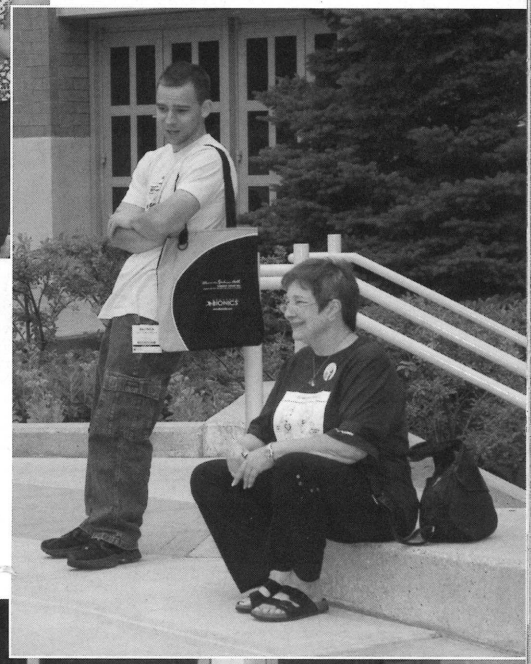
The Hyatt Regency and Midwest Airlines Center are connected by a second-floor skywalk, with a hallway/vestibule area and glass double doors. These are normally kept open, allowing free access between the two hotels. This would have made it easier for AGBell registrants to "cross over" and visit the DBC sessions (which were held on the Regency's second floor). But the skywalk, which is Midwest property, was closed off and locked during the conferences, with a sign set up just outside the doors stating that it was closed, and that an alternative exit some distance away should be used.

AGBell claimed that Midwest was responsible for closing the walkway, while Midwest claimed that AGBell ordered the walkway closed. Tami Hossler obtained proof that the walkway was closed on AGBell's orders.

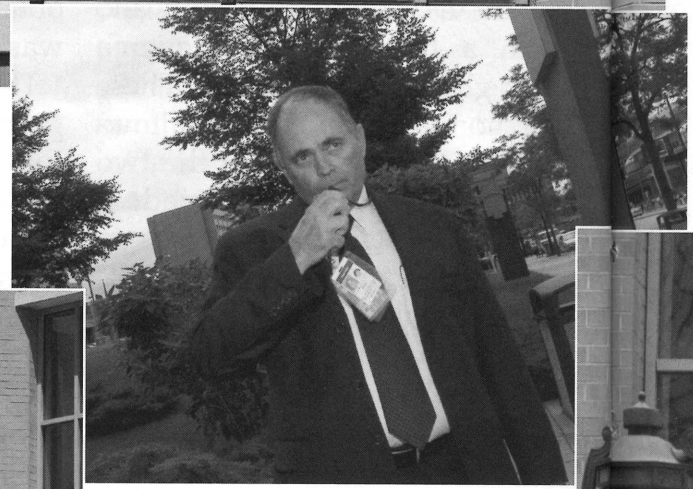
This also meant that DBC rally-goers had to take a roundabout route, but they nonetheless succeeded in making themselves seen and heard. Carrying signs, placards, and flags, they proceeded around the block, stationing themselves across the street from the Midwest (in accordance with police orders), where a boldly-lettered 30-foot banner on the side of a trailer had been hung: "A.G. BELL, TEAR DOWN THIS WALL! Let All Deaf Children Sign!" Rally organizers addressed the crowd, focusing on the crucial importance of giving deaf babies and young children access to ASL. The rallies could be clearly seen from the Midwest's windows, and

AGBell attendees watch DBC's Saturday rally from the second-floor windows of the Midwest Airlines Center, even taking photos.

AGBell attendees crossing the street . . . some to get a closer look at the Sunday rally, and to ask questions of the DBC participants.



Friendly dialogue: a young AGBell attendee named Matthew chats with a DBC participant. AGBell Convention organizers sought to prevent intermingling by closing off the inter-hotel walkway, but some friendly contact nonetheless took place outside.

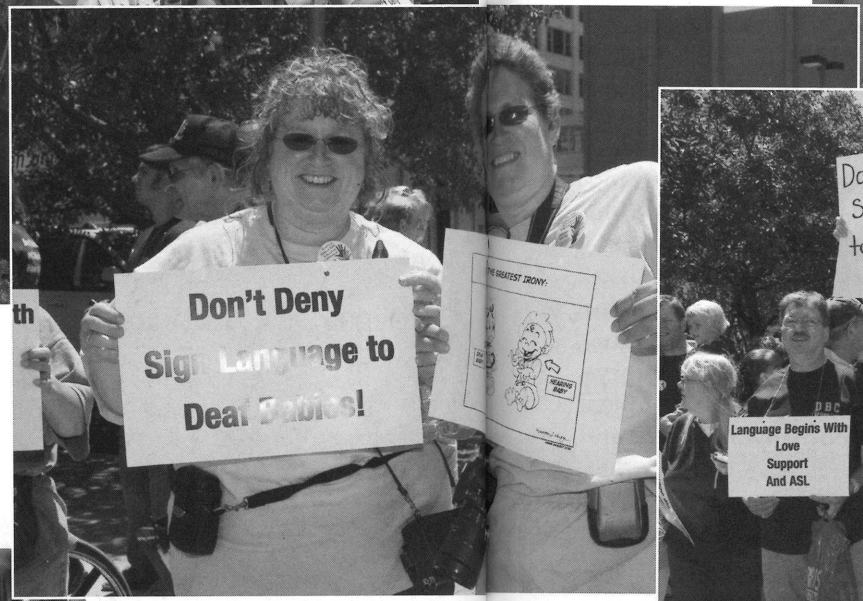


A bit of trouble from AGBell: this grim-looking man, a security staffer from the Midwest Airlines Center, radios for police, attempting to have Rex Barlow and a fellow Deaf photographer arrested. (No arrests were made.)

Curious and bemused AGBell attendees watching the Sunday DBC rally.

Enthusiastic DBC rally participants. The Midwest Airlines Center, site of the AGBell Convention, is in the background at left.

Children participated enthusiastically in the rallies.



Spirits were high—and the weather sunny—and the cause was great!

Another view of rally participants. Signs read: "Language Begins With Love/Support/And ASL," "ASL enhances early literacy," and "Deaf Children Have A Right to American Sign Language (ASL)."

Rally participants display their pride and placards: "Deaf babies and children have a right to American Sign Language."

A close-up view of DBC's 30-foot banner. The bold red headline and black subtitle were clearly visible from the Midwest Airlines Center.

Tami Hossler being videotaped onsite.

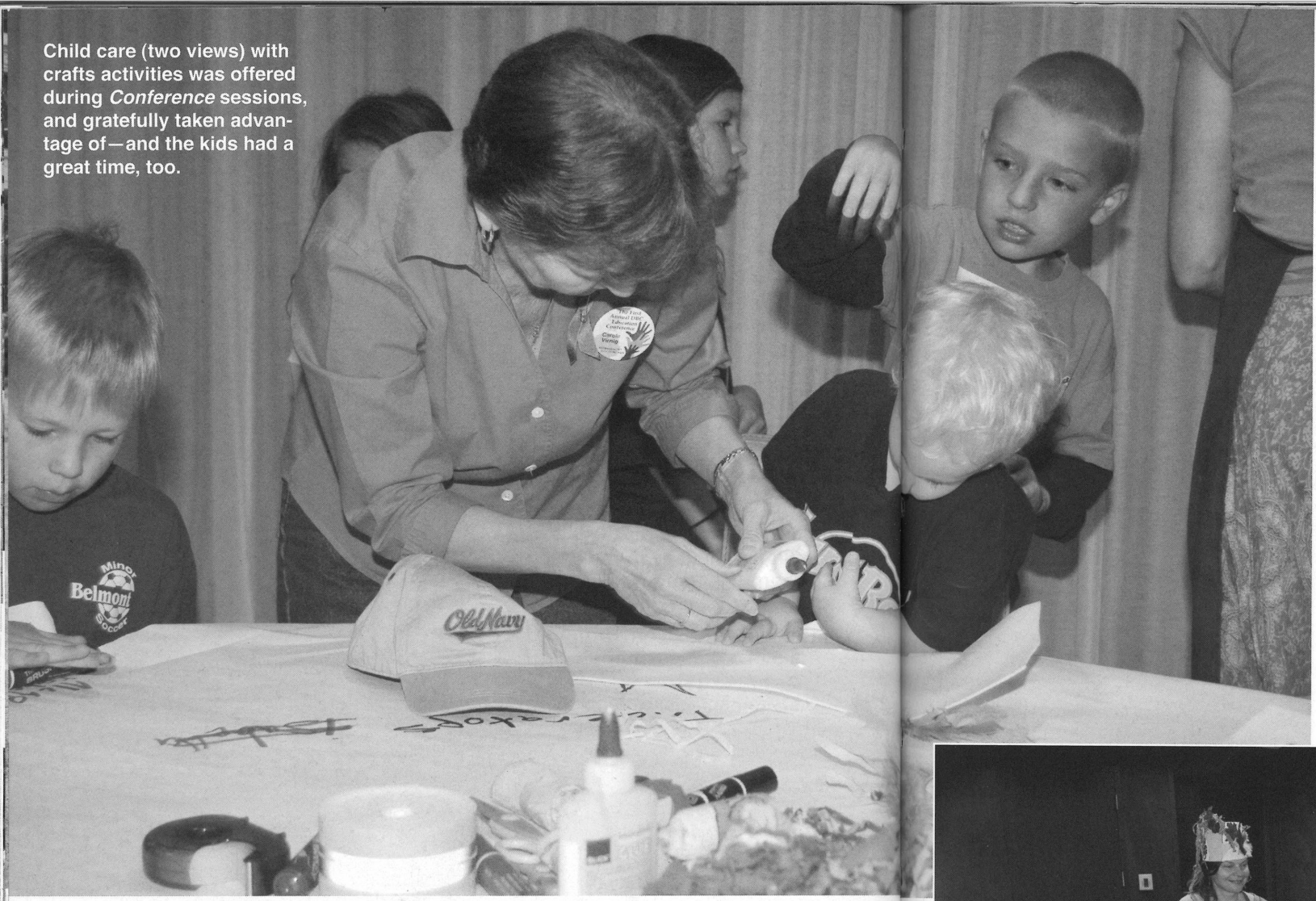
clusters of curious AGBell attendees came to the windows to watch the action. The rallyers signed and waved, and beckoned them to join the throng. A few waved back. And some crossed the street to talk to the DBC attendees, asking questions and getting honest answers. And being welcomed.

As Hossler explains in a DBC release:

> AG Bell has recently accelerated the application of the Oralist approach in schools and early-intervention programs by merging with Auditory-Verbal International, whose policies and practices deny Deaf babies access to their natural language, American Sign Language, and also, perversely, prohibit any and all kinds of visual cues and gestures.
>
> With the rapid, market-driven growth of hearing technologies, this extreme and unnatural training, called "Auditory-Verbal Therapy," has taken on a deceptively attractive appearance, especially to hearing parents who may lack sufficient knowledge of the benefits of American Sign Language, as well as knowledge of the benefits of exposure to Deaf mentors in early-intervention programs. AG Bell continues to claim to be in favor of parents making "informed choices," but ironically markets an exclusive choice: Auditory-Verbal Therapy.
>
> Historically, AG Bell and its corporate allies have deliberately denigrated Sign Language and exploited Deaf people who use American Sign Language. AG Bell has also taken legal action through its Children's Legal Advocacy (CLA) program, in the attempt to establish legal precedents which would lead to the denial of Deaf children's natural need for visual language.
>
> The DBC will continue to advocate and support the bilingual approach which starts with American Sign Language and English as a second language. Through ASL-English bilingualism, Deaf babies and children are able to develop normal cognitive skills, and experience social and emotional growth by using a language which is fully accessible to them. The inclusion of American Sign Language in the lives of Deaf babies and children guarantees children's success and their ability to grow up to become confident, self-respecting participants in society.
>
> On this July Fourth weekend, the Deaf Bilingual Coalition wishes to extend its sincere greetings to parents of Deaf children, with the invitation to join us in our quest to provide accurate information to enable parents to provide their Deaf children a full range of access to language and education. When parents exercise their freedom of choice and allow their Deaf children to use a natural sign language to progress through all necessary stages of cognitive development, their children will be able to understand the real meaning of freedom through language.

A panoramic view of the rally.

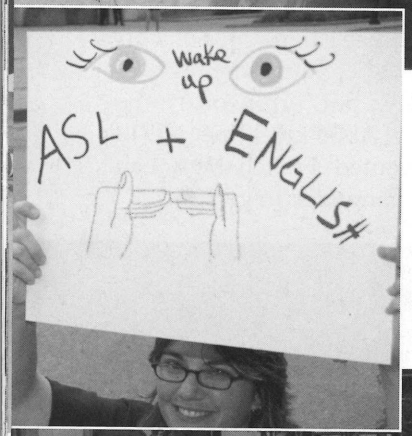
Child care (two views) with crafts activities was offered during *Conference* sessions, and gratefully taken advantage of—and the kids had a great time, too.



DBC is not against cochlear implants, hearing parents, or speech training. But it does insist that all deaf children have the right to sign, and that attempts to prohibit them from access to ASL are not only unethical, but bad educational practice. DBC poses a direct challenge to AGBell's philosophy, its mission, its PR spin, its doublespeak, and its long history of deceiving and brainwashing parents, a campaign that began with its founder Alexander Graham Bell. While claiming to respect all communication choices and "diversity of viewpoints," AGBell's official Website accords a mere three sentences to the ASL option, with an insulting implication that ASL users separate themselves from mainstream culture, while marketing the old hard-line oralist dogma in new, up-to-date packaging (AVT).

DBC participants returned home on June 30, inspired and empowered, making plans for the next conference, and more determined than ever to advocate for the right of *all* deaf children to have immediate and full access to ASL. ■

*Throughout his paper, Bell refers to what we now call American Sign Language as "De l'Epée's Language of Signs " or "the De l'Epée sign-language." It was commonly, but erroneously, believed that the Abbé de l'Epée (1712-1789) had invented French Sign Language (or sign language in general).



▲ DBC attendees on their way to the Sunday rally.

◀ Another striking handmade sign: "Wake up—ASL + ENGLISH are equal."

▲ A young participant shares his philosophy of communication, with a bit of assistance from Mom.

◀ A striking banner from the Chicago Deaf and Hard of Hearing Cultural Center.

▶ Jason Altman leads a rousing chant of "Let all Deaf children sign!"—with children's participation. David O. Reynolds is behind them.

◀ Barbara DiGiovanni addresses the rally crowd on Sunday. In the background, the Midwest Airlines Center.

As the rallyers assemble in front of the Hyatt Regency, David O. Reynolds leads them in the chant, "Let all Deaf children sign!" ▼

Just a moment: DBC Core Team members and ***Conference*** organizers (above) manage to hold still for a group portrait. From left, standing: Jack Barr, Judy Gough, Ella Mae Lentz, Barbara DiGiovanni, David O. Reynolds, Alyce Reynolds, Colin Piotrowski, David Eberwein, Jason Altman, Jill Lestina, and Marian Lucas. Kneeling/sitting: Brian Riley, John Egbert, Kristen Marie Weiner, Dan Houlihan, Darrell Roby, Tami Hossler, and Erica Hossler. Front left: Leslie Riggs and Ruthie Jordan.

Waving hands and high spirits as the Conference ends (right). Tami Hossler is seen at right; Ruthie Jordan and Brian Riley in center; Jason Altman at left.

DeafView

READERS' VIEWPOINT

READERS' RESPONSES

Are Deaf Culture advocates spreading the message that it's "bad" to want to hear better?

49% Yes 25% No 26% Not sure

NO (Deaf)—Deaf advocates aren't actively "spreading" this message; however, the Deaf society doesn't exactly approve of the use of cochlear implants. Hearing aids are generally accepted, though. But then again, acting too "HOH" isn't accepted.

YES (Deaf)— I am deaf and can hear some sounds such as cricket making noises. I wear hearing aid. I am "typical deaf" coming from deaf family and use mixed ASL and sign language. When deaf people realize that I am able to hear some, they always said "You are not deaf. You are 'hearing'-on-the-forehead sign." I was able to talk verbally with hearing employees. They said that I should not use my voice. I feel somewhat discriminated [against]. Speaking of stereotyping from hearing people on deaf, I think deaf people are worse in stereotyping because they think I should act like deaf and not use my hearing abilities. I always say I am an individual and secondly deaf person.

NO (Hearing)—Instead of saying that wanting to hear is "bad," they are combatting the majority perspective that not being able to hear is bad.

NOT SURE (HoH)—There are very positive Deafcultural arguments for avoiding cochlear implants, based on focusing on the best means of communication for Deaf folks, to increase the richness of Deaf people's lives. On the other hand, I think it is very sad when people with cochlear implants or other assistive devices are treated as "race-traitors."

Total number of "DeafView" responses: **117**

DeafView

READERS' VIEWPOINT

DEAF LIFE would like to know what you think about major issues affecting the Deaf community. Fax your response to (585) 442-6371, E-mail us at reply@deafview.com or send it to us at Box 23380, Rochester, NY 14692-3380.

Is the DBC doing the right thing by standing up to AGBell?

❑Yes ❑No ❑Not sure

Background:

The Deaf Bilingual Coalition was formed by a group of Deaf and hearing advocates who were concerned about the tactics used by the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf, including its claim to respect diversity of opinions and choices while marketing a single option: Auditory-Verbal Therapy. They are also concerned about AGBell's being underwritten by the wealthy cochlear-implant industry and its enabling parents to bring lawsuits against school districts offering ASL programs, described as "inappropriate placements." DBC's goal is to ensure that parents have access to complete information about *all* possible communication and educational options—and believes that all deaf babies and children benefit from immediate access to ASL.

Deadline: October 1, 2008

Visit the
DeafView homepage at

www.deafview.com

to respond to this and the other upcoming questions.
(24 questions are currently posted.)

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